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Population and housing censuses

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted to the Statistical Commission in accordance with a request of the Commission at its fortieth session (see E/2009/24). It presents activities completed in respect of the implementation of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, including the conduct of training workshops; the dissemination of the second revision of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*; the development of a website to serve as a census knowledge base; and the development of a software package, CensusInfo, to help countries disseminate census data. It also contains information on future activities related to the 2010 World Programme. The Commission is requested to take note of the report.

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I. Introduction

1. At its thirty-eighth session (E/2007/24), the Statistical Commission requested the United Nations Statistics Division and other international agencies to increase their technical assistance to national statistical offices in order to strengthen national capacity for the implementation of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses. In addition, the Commission requested countries to begin implementation of the revised *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*.

II. National implementation of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses

2. By the end of 2009, some 78 countries or areas, representing an estimated 21 per cent of the world population, had undertaken a population and housing census for the 2010 round. In 2009 alone, 14 countries, including Azerbaijan, Belarus, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, New Caledonia, Vanuatu and Viet Nam, conducted a census. A census is scheduled to be held in 63 countries in 2010 and 54 countries in 2011. There are nine countries or areas in the world which have not yet scheduled a census for the 2010 round: Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Lebanon, Madagascar, Myanmar, Somalia, Togo, Uzbekistan and Western Sahara.

Implementation of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses

	Census already taken by the end of 2009	*Census scheduled*	*Census not yet scheduled*
Number of countries	78	146	9
Percentage of the world population	21%	77%	2%

3. Throughout the census round, the Division closely monitors and regularly updates the information on the censuses already taken as well as on those which are planned, identifying countries that are postponing their census. Since 2005, the start of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses, several countries have rescheduled the census at least once by postponing it. For some, the date has changed more than once. As observed during the 2000 round, budgetary constraints, weak administrative capacity or political instability are among the reasons for the postponement.

III. Activities of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses

4. In line with the mandate to assist countries to conduct a census during the 2010 round of population and housing censuses, the Division carried out in 2009 a variety of activities that aimed at enhancing national implementation of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses. Throughout the year, the Division continued to develop census guidelines including handbooks and technical reports; developed a software package, CensusInfo, to help countries disseminate

census data; organized training activities on CensusInfo as well as on census evaluation; maintained a census resource centre that included a knowledge base; and launched the web-based 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme Newsletter to reach out to a wider audience.

5. In addition to working with the United Nations regional commissions, the Division continued to work closely with such international agencies as the World Bank, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in this domain.

A. International census guidelines

6. The second revision of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* has been published in print form and is also available online at the (Division) website for the 2010 World Programme. The publication is being translated into all United Nations official languages.

7. The *Handbook on Geospatial Infrastructure in Support of Census Activities* was published in 2009. The Handbook takes into account recent technological developments in the geographic information area with regard to geospatial technologies and to approaches to the use of geospatial applications for statistical purposes, including population and housing censuses. It provides census planners and related personnel with technical guidelines on contemporary methods, tools, and best practices for application in census mapping operations.

8. Based on the vast amount of information that was presented and collected during a series of workshops on census data processing conducted in 2008, the Division prepared the *Technical Report on Census Data Capture Methodology*, for use by countries in carrying out their population and housing censuses. The report introduces various technical options available for data capture and explains how each method can be applied. The report is available online at the Division website for the 2010 World Programme and also in print form.

9. In 2009, the Division issued the *Manual on Census Evaluation: Post-Enumeration Surveys*. The manual, which was used as a reference guide in the workshops on census evaluation conducted by the Division, gives an overview of the various methods of census evaluation, with a particular focus on the post-enumeration survey (PES) methodology. It presents operational basics of a PES and highlights issues to be taken into account in its implementation. It also discusses challenges associated with the implementation of the PES and how they can be mitigated. The document also contains detailed examples from selected countries on how the PES was conducted in recent census rounds.

B. Technical assistance

10. The Division provides, upon request, technical support to specific countries for the advancement of the global statistical system. For example, the Director of the Division chairs the Iraq Census International Technical Advisory Board. The mandate of the Advisory Board is to provide expertise of nationally and internationally recognized experts to assist the Iraqi Government in its endeavour to conduct a population and housing census in compliance with international standards.

C. CensusInfo software for census data dissemination

11. The Division, in partnership with UNICEF and UNFPA, has developed a free software package, CensusInfo, to help countries disseminate census results on CD-ROM and on the Web. CensusInfo was officially launched by the Statistical Commission at its 40th session in February 2009. In order to facilitate the use of CensusInfo, the Division organized regional as well as national training workshops, offering data managers hands-on experience to master CensusInfo.

12. Three regional workshops on the implementation of CensusInfo were held in Georgetown from 12 to 15 October 2009 for countries of the Caribbean region; Maputo from 10 to 13 November 2009 for English-speaking African countries; and Bamako from 30 November to 4 December 2009 for French-speaking African countries.

13. The Division also undertook two national in-house training sessions on the implementation of the CensusInfo software. In-house training was conducted in Monrovia from 26 to 30 October 2009 for the staff of the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services; and Maputo from 16 to 20 November 2009 for the staff of the Instituto Nacional de Estatística of Mozambique.

D. Training workshops on census evaluation

14. In 2009, the Division, in collaboration with the relevant regional commissions and subregional organizations, conducted three workshops on census evaluation with a focus on PES. These workshops were held in Asunción from 3 to 7 August 2009 for Latin American countries; Addis Ababa from 14 to 18 September 2009 for English-speaking African countries; and Tunis from 7 to 11 December 2009 for French-speaking African countries.

15. The Division carries out follow-up activities aimed at monitoring the implementation of workshop recommendations.

E. 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme website

16. The Division maintains the website of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/census2010.htm. The website provides the latest information available on census-related activities in the world: census-taking in the countries and meetings and workshops organized by the Division and other organizations of the United Nations system in support of census activities. The website also offers access to regularly updated information on the actual and expected dates for the 2010 census round in every country, questionnaires used in national censuses, and links to websites of national statistical offices and relevant international organizations.

17. One of the important features of the website is the census knowledge base, which serves as a repository of census methodology and documents pertaining to best practices of countries in census-taking. To date, the knowledge base contains more than 370 documents on activities related to census-taking produced by countries or experts for seminars or for national use.

18. In 2009, a new feature entitled "Country implementation" was added to the Programme website. It provides access to documents relevant to census implementation at the national level, and complements the more methodological documents from countries which are posted on the knowledge census bases.

19. During 2009, the Division regularly updated census news on the website and published a periodic newsletter, the *2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme Newsletter*, in order to provide a synopsis of recent developments, events and census-taking activities related to the census round.

E. Compilation and analysis of information on census methodology used by countries for the 2010 census round

20. The Division, in collaboration with the United Nations regional commissions, launched an initiative to collect and analyse information on methods used by countries in the planning and conduct of their censuses. A questionnaire was sent to countries asking for information on national census practices on broad areas: timing and method of data collection, cartography, enumeration, data processing, evaluation, data dissemination, challenges and areas of expertise. Information on the budget of a census was also asked. The objective of the analysis is to better understand how countries are planning and conducting or otherwise compiling data for the 2010 census round. The information is useful for assessing countries' needs for assistance in implementing the round.

21. About 110 countries or areas have completed and returned the questionnaire by the end of 2009. The information is being entered into a database and will be analysed and widely disseminated during 2010.

IV. Future activities

22. In view of the fact that the majority of countries will undertake their census either in 2010 or 2011, the programme of the Division will shift its focus to activities aimed at supporting census data dissemination and analysis in the coming years.

Promotion of CensusInfo

23. In 2010, the Division will conduct training workshops on CensusInfo in some of the regions and countries that were not covered in 2009.

Expert group meeting on contemporary practices in census data dissemination

24. An expert group meeting is planned to be held in 2010 to discuss national practices in census data dissemination, including the development of a strategy and the use of technology. Experts from developing as well as developed countries will be invited to the meeting.

Workshops and seminars on data analysis and dissemination

25. Realizing the challenges faced by many developing countries in ensuring effective data analysis and dissemination strategies, the Division, in collaboration

with other relevant stakeholders, will organize regional and national workshops or seminars to support capacity-building of countries for census data analysis and dissemination.

Technical guidelines

26. Based on the materials collected for and discussed in the aforementioned expert group meeting as well as other regional and national seminars, the Division will prepare a technical report on census data dissemination and analysis.

Technical assistance and study visits

27. Technical assistance missions will be undertaken to provide country-specific support, especially to countries that are in difficult situations or emerging out of conflict. The aim of the missions will be to strengthen the capacity of countries in conducting censuses. Study visits will also be arranged to foster and enhance South-to-South cooperation and the sharing of experiences among countries.

Monitoring

28. In 2010, the Division will continue to publish information on the progress made by countries in conducting population and housing censuses, and identify the status quo of census-taking in various countries. As part of the monitoring of the 2010 census round, the Division will also continue to maintain a database containing the status of coverage of the recommended topics as described in the second revision of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*.

29. The Commission may wish to take note of the present report, and support the activities that the Division undertook to enhance national implementing of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses.